



INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA  
TRIBUNAL INTERNATIONAL DU DROIT DE LA MER

## **Press Release**

### **PRESIDENT HOFFMANN CELEBRATES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RULE OF LAW FOR THE OCEANS AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMEMORATION OF THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADOPTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA**

President Hoffmann addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations today at a plenary meeting dedicated to the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption and opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

In his statement, President Hoffmann hailed the Convention's establishment of a comprehensive legal framework for maritime activities as a major achievement, noting in particular the inclusion of compulsory dispute-settlement procedures entailing binding decisions. He recalled in this regard that the establishment of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea responded to the desire "to create a new institution, decoupled from the power relations of the old-world order", and to the need to create a body with specialized expertise in the law of the sea and with a central role to play in the settlement of maritime disputes. He also paid tribute to the spirit of appreciation of international law and cooperation between States that prevailed at the time and which led to the adoption of the Convention.

In evaluating the impact of the Tribunal's jurisprudence, President Hoffmann stated that the Tribunal has, in the exercise of its mandate, contributed to the peaceful settlement of disputes and to the development of the law of the sea across a range of legal issues covered by the Convention. Cases have involved, for example, the detention of vessels, the protection and preservation of the marine environment, the conservation and management of fisheries resources, maritime delimitation and activities in the Area.

President Hoffmann welcomed the continued confidence of States Parties in the Tribunal, evidenced by several agreements whereby parties have decided to transfer disputes, initially submitted to arbitration under Annex VII of the Convention, to the Tribunal or to a special ad hoc chamber of the Tribunal.

The President recognized that knowledge of the ocean, its resources and the deep seabed has vastly increased thanks to scientific and technical advances. Looking forward, he also addressed the fact that new issues, such as marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction or the impact of climate change on the oceans

including sea-level rise, are now emerging as areas of concern. The President reiterated his conviction that the Convention remains relevant in dealing with such challenges and changing circumstances. In this respect, he emphasized the desire of the international community to provide answers to new challenges within the framework of the Convention, as demonstrated in the current negotiations on an instrument on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).

President Hoffmann closed his statement confirming his belief that the Convention will continue to advance the rule of law for the oceans and asserting that the Tribunal remains at the service of States, standing ready to face current and future challenges in the law of the sea.

Further speakers at the event included the President of the General Assembly, Mr Csaba Kőrösi; the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr António Guterres; and the Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations, who gave a statement on behalf of the previous President of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, Mr Tommy Koh; as well as the President of the thirty-second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention and Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations; the President of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority; the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority; and the Chairperson of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

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